

I am delighted to be here at the opening of this exciting project at Kakimori Bunko.

I would, first, like to extend my sincere thanks to Ms Imai and the staff at Kakimori Bunko for agreeing to collaborate with myself and colleagues at The University of Sunderland and the Wordsworth Trust in presenting this important project in Japan.

### **on-ko chi-shin**

There is an old Japanese proverb (on-ko chi-shin), taken from a Chinese one (wengu zhixin), which says that only by exploring the old can one understand the new.

This exhibition presents original manuscripts of William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Matsuo Bashō alongside new work by contemporary UK and Japanese artists produced both individually and collaboratively.

The idea for the exhibition arose, initially, from a visit I undertook with Prof. Brian Thompson to Kakimori Bunko in 2011 when I saw a number of Bashō manuscripts which the Director (Ms Imai) and her staff kindly showed me. My memory was of a delightfully theatrical ‘performance’ as these wonderful manuscripts were carefully hung on the wall and the scrolls ‘unfurled’. It is an experience that is embedded in my memory.

Shortly after this visit to Kakimori Bunko, Brian and I subsequently attended a conference at the Wordsworth Trust in the Lake District in England called *Beyond Words: Understanding and Sharing the Meaning of Manuscripts* at which the Trust’s Curator, Jeff Cowton, described the wonderful William and Dorothy Wordsworth manuscripts on display as evidence of ‘the texture of their thought’

Although both Wordsworth and Bashō are viewed through a historical lens these days, both were radical formal innovators in their day and so it seemed appropriate to ask contemporary artists to interpret their work for this exhibition. I hope that the wide range of newly commissioned poetry, glass, calligraphy, sculpture, painting, design, ceramics and music/sound will give visitors to this exhibition ways of seeing their words and manuscripts afresh – to see them as living documents – part of a creative continuum that stretches from the past through to the present.

I began work on the exhibition **Wordsworth and Bashō: Walking Poets** nervously. Although I had been inspired by the knowledge that the Wordsworths (Dorothy and William) and Bashō were prodigious walkers whose walking gave structure and form to their poetry and prose, colleagues had suggested that further comparison between the Wordsworths and Bashō, was ‘perilous’ at best; I was, however, surprised to find many similarities as well as differences between these poets and writers and I hope that you will enjoy exploring their poetry and prose illuminated by the work of thirty-two wonderful contemporary Japanese and UK artists.

This is also the first time that original manuscripts by Bashō and the Wordsworths have been shown alongside each other – and a chance for Japanese audiences to become better acquainted with the fresh, down to earth and yet lyrical prose of Dorothy. I do hope you enjoy this exhibition.

There are too many people to thank individually in this short address, but I would like especially to thank Professor Saeko Yoshikawa, Christine & Hiro Flint-Sato and Nobuya Monta in Japan – their help has been invaluable and is very much appreciated. And from the UK, Ayako Tani and Janet Ross who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the show opens on time!

And, of course, a special vote of thanks, too, to the trustees of the Wordsworth Trust who have generously agreed to lend the Wordsworth manuscripts – and to all our sponsors including Vantec and Hitachi.